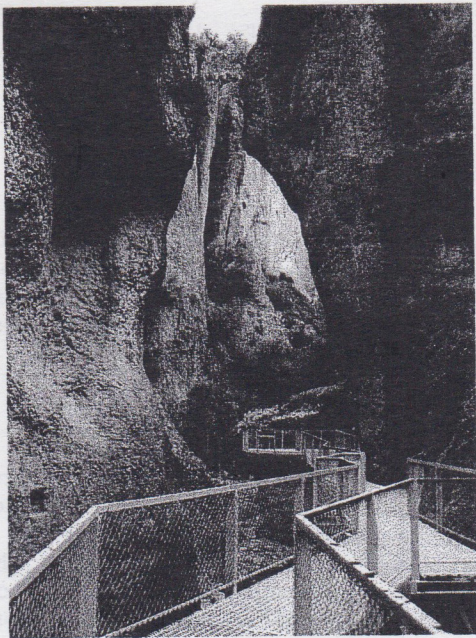




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#28

Mishap #28 --- Trade/\$2/free if need be

PO Box 5841

Eugene OR 97405 usa

mishapzine@yahoo.com

COVER: The Catwalk, Glenwood, NM

"Technology amplifies human instincts and desires, but it must obey the laws of nature if it is to sustain human life, not destroy it. And so we must remember we are part of nature, too. We may be dependent on machines, but we operate like them at our peril....Technology that appears to transcend the limits of the physical world merely shifts the costs of its use elsewhere." -John Freeman

January

The sign read: "US Out!" Tracy and I first noticed it a few years back as we sped by a golf course along the freeway in Woodburn, Oregon. A yellow square tacked to a tree behind a fence, I mistook the sign, at first, for a political statement. It was one I could support, unlike the many right-wing signs erected every election cycle. The "US Out!" sign was merely an ad, though, a rebus puzzle. The big check mark before the words translated the message into a come on: "check us out", referring to the trophy homes dotting the golf course like sand traps for retiree's money.

Though my hope in an anti-american message was deflated, it still brought a chuckle every time I drove by. As such, it could be a metaphor for every hope in dissent, large or small, that I've ever had. Hope. Deflation. A chuckle.

It was a drizzled day in January when I noticed the sign was gone and I miss the little chuckle it provided; that small relief from the sadness that follows hope and deflation.

August

Old Highway 197 rises from the Columbia River, its paved track allowing my vehicle to pass between wheat fields, now shorn at the end of summer so that the dirty, straw-colored landscape of hills and valleys is revealed. Though the music I'm listening to is derived from the myths in a different land, the folk metal I've become partial to fits the fields of Northern Oregon like fog belongs beneath the canopy of coastal redwoods. A soaring keyboard rises above heavy guitars and the double bass drum kicks in the crescendo crash just as the car crests a hill and I look west: sunlight pierces cloud and reflects bright off the snow still remaining high on Mt. Hood.

No, too perfect, I protest: the timing like a soundtrack trying to induce emotion during a trite scene. Yet, there it is, this massive, silent being come into view, looming in the light with its contours revealed in relief by shadows.

But I'm a modern human with a knowing cynicism and unhealthy sense of irony who will refuse a gift with a protest that it cannot possibly be a beautiful moment. Too perfect, this doubt.

February 9

This Monday I have off from work because it's my birthday. After a delightful weekend with Tracy, I drive back to Eugene and 35 doesn't seem like much when the odometer reads 186,000. My plan for the evening involves some form of beer and Batman comic books.

There's this notion floating around in our culture's garish consciousness that those of my generation—loosely defined as the children of baby-boomers—have refused to grow up. That we were sheltered by our over-protective parents and will not put away childish things. I don't know about that, but I didn't start reading Batman comic books until after I turned 30; after I'd been married for almost ten years, had the same job that long and owned a home for almost seven. These are all markers for adulthood and all meaningless when it comes to defining maturity (honesty, empathy, introspection, in case you wondered what I thought).

I've been around people of various ages most of my life through family friendships, punk, work, and political organizing. I've met 14 year olds more adult than 44 year olds; children in their twenties and crusty curmudgeons still miles from the top of the 40 hill. Maturity, in our culture, is defined by falling in line and every single person resents having to lock-step to what they are supposed to do.

Therefore, everyone has moments of juvenile rebellion that flare up like sparklers on the Fourth of July.

Being "grown-up" is never truly achieved—not because of those children's book tropes about how adults are just as confused, scared, or unsure as kids are—because nearly all of us don't want to knuckle under to society's dull, dreary definition of adulthood. For sure, I do not discount those hardships and traumas that commonly cause so many to have to grow up before their time. I'm saying that adulthood as a concept in the U.S. is stultifying and limiting in its definition and most of us want to rebel but don't know of any alternative. So this rebellion becomes the equivalent of Adam Sandler movies or a nerd obsession (I include sports here) or a lack of empathy and responsibility towards others.

Reading Batman comics isn't my way of releasing juvenile dissent against adulthood, but not being ashamed of reading them is one.

5



July

Signs I'm Getting Old:

- Teenagers no longer look like people, but like kids.
- I'll tell a story about a show, a protest, or an experience and my younger listener will say, "Wow, I was five then."
- Records currently thought of as "classics" I bought when first released.
- What did you say? Huh? Yeah, I think I should have worn ear plugs at all those basement shows.
- Getting I.D.'d for beer is now fun!
- My peers have kids in high school and people ten years younger than me are pushing strollers.
- I start sentences with the phrase, "It just seems like kids these days...."
- or, "Punk was better back when...."

November

I'm a bit self-conscious when I peruse the Young Adult section at the public library, as if a librarian is waiting to clamp a hand on my shoulder, lean over, and ask, "Aren't you a little old to be in this area, hmmm?" Alas, all the cool comics and fresh fantasy books reside in YA, so I am forced to saunter in with a fake cool usually reserved for teenage boys in the aisle holding the condoms. Librarians are known for their love of YA books, but I'm still apprehensive. Nobody wants to be the creepy old guy hanging around kid stuff.

Right, I was in the stacks, craning the neck like a bird looking for food on a branch when I hear a kid in the next aisle start singing.

"It's a holiday in Cambodia," he warbled, "Where people dress in black. It's a holiday in Cambodia—," he stopped.

"Where you'll kiss ass or crack," I finished the chorus to a song written about a genocide that had occurred when I was barely alive. The kid was silent as I rounded the rectangular shelf. I smiled and said "hey" to this fourteen year old kid and he merely looked back at me with a discomfited stare before quickly turning away and returning to sit with his friend on the bench beneath the windows.

I chuckled, wondering about the youth these days.... At his age, I would have been excited to discover another potential punk in such a random manner. I would have said something dumb like "Dead Kennedys, cool!" But when I was a lad in a small Central Oregon town, punks were rare and the scene was uncharted territory—off the edge of the map where words read "Here Be Circle Pits." Maybe I would have been too shy, but I don't think so. The various punk scenes I've been involved with have always consisted of people in multiple age brackets and old never meant strange to me. Punk, despite its recurring theme of youth in rebellion, has always been one of the few scenes whose social fabric has been stitched together with people of all ages (what the shows are called, eh?). I'd hate to see it become like the rest of society where people stick to their specific age

range and old punks can't relate to those damn kids who don't know how good it was back when....

I was smiling because of this random punk encounter but the kid at the library wasn't having it, for whatever reason. Here, I was the stranger. The creepy old guy perusing the kid's section and trying to lure a kid into my clutches with thirty year old punk songs. Not that I felt self-conscious or anything.

December

My dad will suddenly, sharply produce political pronouncements seemingly unbidden. We'll be talking about construction jobs and he'll blurt out something about Obama apologizing for America (we never have to do that, right or wrong, as the first Bush informed us). Lately dad has taken to muttering stuff about Al Gore and global warming, then saying, "You don't believe in that, do you?" I'd answer, but you can't have a conversation with a guy who doesn't listen: deaf in one ear from firing machine guns in Vietnam and deaf in the other from a protective sound barrier of prejudice. That's why he, and millions like him, listens to psychopaths like Michael Savage: their prejudices are confirmed and watered with noxious justifications like fields fertilized with toxic sludge.

On the phone once, I did have a comeback when he derided global warming after his area received a record snowfall. I would have liked to talk about how global warming is a measured fact and we could argue anthropogenic causes, natural cycles, and computer models, but hey, remember what I said about

conversations? Or I could have said something about how I don't care if global warming is real or not, because nearly all the measures to combat it would be good for the planet anyway. I tried an analogy instead, because stories beat straight-forward arguments any day.

Okay, I said to my dad, turn on the heat in the house all the way up. Next, open the freezer door and lower the temperature in there all the way, leaving the door wide afterwards. Sure is cold in that freezer, right, just like it is frickin' cold at your place. But the house continues to warm up, doesn't it?

"Huh, freezer, huh? Here, talk to your mother."

Sigh.

September

Ahh, a spotted towhee, I thought, spying the little bird whilst out ambling the wetlands. Fall had challenged summer to a duel, lost, and bled out while the sun still warmed the land. Content in my wandering, I didn't, at first, hear the calls for help. Attention drawn from birds on branches, I noticed a fresh hillock of dirt next to a hole. From this rather steep-sided pit had come the pleas for assistance that had disturbed my walk. Sidling close, I peered down at a disheveled shoveler and his plight was easily grasped.

9



"Say there, good fellow, what seems to be the trouble?" I asked, obtusely good-humored.

"I've dug too deep and can't climb out! Please help!"

"Certainly, sir. I shall endeavor to procure the necessary instruments to aid in your rescue," I replied. A short excursion and I was back forthwith.

"Here you are old chap, just the thing for one in your predicament."

"Thank you, thank you, thank you," he repeated, relieved.

Silence.

"Well, come on then, get a leg up," I encouraged as he had yet to emerge from his hole.

"What the hell kind of joke is this?" he demanded, a bit ungratefully, if you ask me.

"That," I said, somewhat icily I will admit, "is the latest technological advancement married to the triple bottom line. To wit: it has a recycled steel blade, sustainably harvested wood handle, and it was hand-crafted in a fair trade shop that pays a living wage."

"What the hell am I supposed to do with it?"

"Why, dig yourself out, obviously," I replied. "Did I mention that the factory producing these little wonders is powered by the wind?"

"It's a fucking shovel, you, you, you idiot!"



I have little patience for the meaningless conceits green capitalism, sustainable business or green technology. Instead, I would like to see some honesty. To borrow an idea from drug treatment methods, people should talk about "harm reduction" in place of so-called "sustainability." Greener—and I use the term reluctantly—technologies and business practices cannot be sustainable given our current economic practices and levels of consumption. They may be *less harmful* to the living world than what they replace, but less is still harm. To speak of sustainability in the same sentence as capitalism—or civilization—is to obscure (obliterate, really) certain realities. One cannot take more from nature than one returns and be sustainable. Any fraction of plastic (that will never disappear and is a return that keeps on hurting) precludes sustainability, as does shipping across great distances. One may do less harm using certain methods—a laudable goal, surely—but, again, less does not mean none.

One cannot do much, but at least one does not have to lie to oneself.



August

As I tend to do from time to time, I made some Lord of the Rings reference and Tracy said something about how unhealthily steeped I was in that fantasy realm.

So I told her she was just like Boromir when he betrayed The Fellowship.

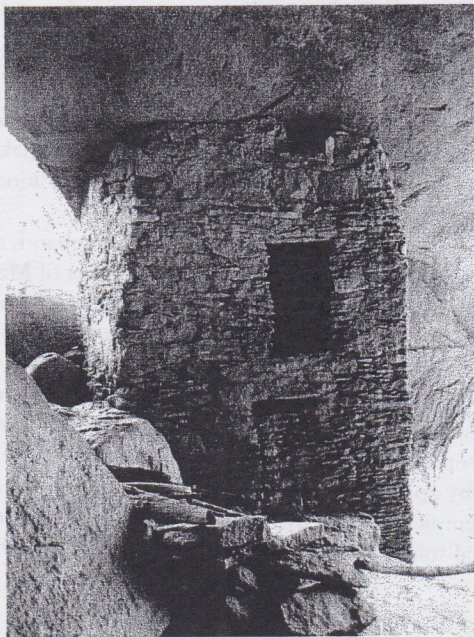
July

I don't really care what people do in their bedrooms or kitchens, but do they have to shove their sexuality in our faces? I'll be enjoying a sandwich at a restaurant only to have my meal disturbed by someone's screaming progeny, the in-your-face result of their heterosexual congress. I mean, jeez, do they have to showcase their whiny brats out in public just to reveal their heterosexual tendencies? Yeah, I got it: you had straight sex, now get that thing outta my sight. Sure, what they do in the privacy of their homes is their business—I'm not a bigot or anything—but such a display of the proof of their hetero-copulation doesn't belong in public. Try to have a little sensitivity for others instead of exposing all of us to the evidence of your sexual predilections. I'm trying to eat here!

GILA

CLIFF

RUINS



March

One of my favorite bands played exactly four shows in 2008 and—praise the lords of metal—one of them was in Portland. I didn't hesitate, only bought a ticket and then figured out how to go.

Agalloch lit a bucketful of sage before the first note was struck, filling the venue with an ob-noxious cloud, but the pagans must make their statements. Note perfect, every song played was a masterpiece of composition and a crowd of three hundred or so was entranced.

The crowd interested me as much as the band, as it was more diverse than you might expect for a metal show that was a part of March Into Darkness (except with regards to race as it was almost all white folks). There were bike punks and hipsters, black metal t-shirts and crusty dreadlocks. Women were perhaps forty percent of the crowd—high even for a punk show, but astronomic when it comes to the male-dominated metal scene. Some might call it a bunch of freaky white people, but I was surprised by the differences. I don't know if it is just in Portland, but the metal shows there tend to appeal to a diverse number of people (if I can be so superficial as to judge by appearance, anyway).

Identities defined by the music one listens to are fading away, replaced by a pan-musical solidarity with anything not mainstream. Or so it seems. Who can't applaud

the loosening of a rigidity that only permits a punk to listen to punk, a metal-head only to metal and a band—Gracyeon—to ditch a guitar and have a cello? There's a reassurance of identity and superficial community in the neo-tribalism of scenes, but aren't there benefits to establishing one's identity independent of musical preferences? Yes, but this show brought a bunch of people together with no intent to foster community. We were just fans. One needn't pledge allegiance to a musical style, but can we be more than consumers?

This is where punk transcended music, by attempting to smash the barrier between experts and consumers: insisting that we're all just folk and pedestals should be empty blocks after we toppled the statues of the elites. As punk expanded, became somewhat codified, and then diversified into a thousand niche-scenes, we went back to being fans (aided, not just a little, by the neo-nostalgia for older bands and styles and the fetishization of records decades old). Still, as much as capitalism has exploited punk's attitude and style, it remains something more than music or a fashion for many.

I'm perfectly happy to be a fan of Agalloch, but it is more important that I'm a participant in punk.



September

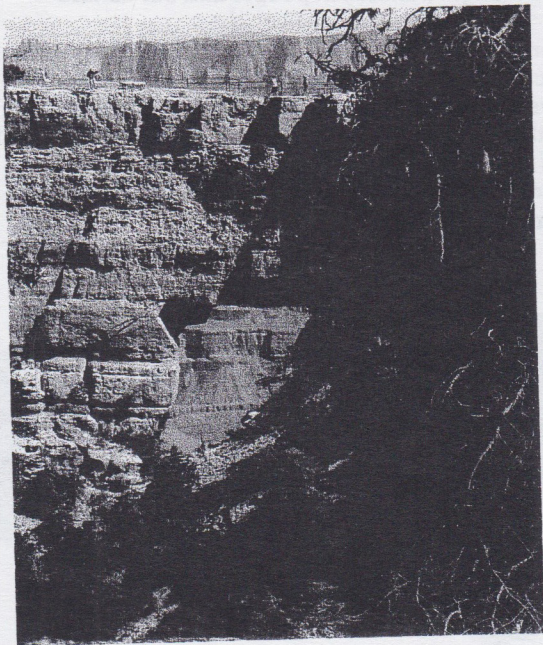
I quit listening to National Public Radio regularly back in the 1990's. I couldn't stand the mushy news and daily updates about what Clinton said that day. I don't know, I was thinking that reporters were supposed to, you know, do research and stuff and not just repeat what those in power said. I'm an idealist that way. My NPR listening is therefore sporadic, but I'll turn it on for specific shows or when making breakfast, as I did one Saturday morning.

Tracy and I listened to a conversation about the ongoing horrors in the Congo—a brutal, heart-wrenching morass that has claimed somewhere around four million lives in the last decade and a half. A reporter in the country was discussing the latest brutalities and about some militias. He said, "They've devolved into raping men" as a tactic of terror. Tracy and I both had faces frozen in shock, outrage: "devolved" as if it were natural what had already been happening, the rape of women as a war tactic of intimidation and debasement. Hey, this reporter implied, it is normal for men to rape women but raping other men is degrading.

What a fucking world. Some might argue that the language doesn't matter, that it is the actual events and actions on the ground that are important—that it is more important to do something to stop them than argue about what we call it. As such, the reporter's poor choice of words isn't all that relevant. I would agree that the actual brutalities are more important than how they are described, but language

does matter insofar as it reveals thought patterns in people and our culture—indeed, even shapes them.

The reporter's use of the word "devolved" revealed a mindset that ensures humanity will never cease to act so brutally towards each other. Reveal that so many of us are locked into ways of thinking that trap us in horrible patterns. I'm sure the reporter knows more than I do about life in the Congo ~~and that~~ and that he was appalled by the rape of women as well. But as long as people think in terms that can call raping women "normal" and the rape of men as "devolving" from that norm, the rape and brutality will go on.



NORTH
RIM
GRAND
CANYON

May

Amebix, live and passionate and the best show I've ever been to.

November

Ensiferum, the second best show ever. Yeah, like ever.

May

Tracy's first metal show was a doozy: Paganfest II with Korpiklaani, Moonsorrow and others. All good fun and she was mighty impressed by Blackguard's synchronized hair whipping as they started their set. The singer for that band and a member of the crowd provided an amusing and revelatory anecdote.

The singer was praising Portland as a paradise full of "pretty people." He paused, stopped pacing, and added, "I meant girls, guys aren't pretty." At the precise moment he was protecting his heterosexuality from question, a young man stepped in front of Tracy and I. Tall, with long, wavy locks, he was absolutely pretty. Tracy and I traded looks, thinking the same thing, and busted out laughing. Coincidence strikes gold again.

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Recent Reads

Nonfiction:

Treespiker by Mike Roselle, **Bright-sided** by Barbara Ehrenreich, **Cataclysms on the Columbia** by John Allen, **Thanks, but This Isn't For Us** by Jessica Page Morrel, **Searching for Whitopia** by Rich Benjamin, **What We Leave Behind** by Derrick Jensen and Aric McBay, **Who Hates Whom** by Bob Harris, **The Tyranny of E-mail** by John Freeman, **Empire of Illusion** by Chris Hedges, **Mythmakers and Lawbreakers: Anarchist Writers on Fiction** by Margaret Killjoy, **The Garden of Peculiarities** by Jesus Sepulveda, **Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age** by Marcus Rediker, **Prehistory: the Making of the Human Mind** by Colin Renfrew

Fiction:

Last Watch by Sergei Lukyanenko, **Sandman Slim** by Richard Kadrey, **Mad Kestrel** by Misty Massey, **The Alchemy of Stone** by Ekaterina Sedia, **Silksinger** and **Lips Touch Three Times** by Laini Taylor, **The Sherriff of Yrnameer** by Michael Reubens, **Unseen Academicals** by Terry Pratchett, **The Toyminator** by Robert Rankin, **The Bell at Sealey Head** by Patricia McKillip, **Prospero Lost** by L. Jagi Lamplighter, **Life Sucks** by Jessica Abel, **Hardball** by Sara Paretsky, **Nine Dragons** by Michael Connelly, **Death: At Death's Door** by Jill Thompson, **The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie** by Alan Bradley, **The Girl Who Played with Fire** by Stieg Larsson

Ryan's Sorry Excuse for a Political Education Through Nonfiction (available at your local library or used bookstore)

--I'm going to stick with books I read throughout my late teens and twenties, after I decided that I didn't particularly like the world as it was, realized how ignorant I was of nearly everything, and was fed up with the comforting lies of America, specifically for white Americans. It's a "sorry excuse" for a list for how short and inadequate it is—merely consider names not on the list, like Fanon—but these are books I consider essential to forming my outlook and giving me a fucking clue. I would love to have your list of books for the next issue. So send them in!

I place these in no particular order, mostly because I can't remember which order I read them in!

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Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee by Dee Brown
I Was Never Alone: A Prison Diary From El Salvador by Nidia Diaz
Reinventing the Enemy's Language edited by Joy Harjo, et al
Custer Died for Your Sins by Vine Deloria Jr.
Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass by Frederick Douglass
Against History, Against Leviathan by Fredy Perlman
This Bridge Called My Back edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa
A Language Older Than Words by Derrick Jensen (and all his books)
Feminism From Margin to Center by bell hooks
Ecofeminism by Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies
Notes From a Native Son by Ward Churchill (and all his books)
Living My Life by Emma Goldman
A People's History of the United States by Howard Zinn
Backlash by Susan Faludi
White Like Me by Tim Wise
Against Civilization edited by John Zerzan
The Autobiography of Angela Davis by Angela Davis
Working by Studs Terkel (and all his oral histories)
Against the Megamachine by David Watson
Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White by Frank H. Wu
The Sexual Politics of Meat by Carol Adams
Sisterhood is Powerful edited by Robin Morgan (and the **Global** title)
In the Spirit of Crazy Horse by Peter Mathiessen

A Taste of Power by Elaine Brown
Dreams of an Insomniac by Irena Klepfisz
The Drowned and the Saved by Primo Levi
Beyond Geography by Frederick W. Turner
Agents of Repression by Churchill and Vanderwall
Transliberation by Leslie Feinberg
Beyond Power by Marilyn French
Rebels Against the Future by Kirkpatrick Sale
Hello, My Name is Chellis and I'm in Recovery From Western Civilization by
Chellis Glendinning
Manufacturing Consent by Noam Chomsky

Oh, there are gaps here that are large enough to sink my flotilla and that's where
you all come in. Any suggestions?

23

Mishap

In Memory of Calvin



GILA
CLIFF
RUINS